

The Ballarat Naturalist

Volume 24 No.05

June 2024



**The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL)
capturing the history of Victoria's Field Naturalists' Clubs
Nicole Kearney, Manager BHL Australia
accompanied by Jack Eastaugh, BHL Digitisation
Technician**

BHL is a global project. It is the world's largest visual library of biodiversity literature and archival material. 605 libraries and publishers across the world have contributed their publications and archives. It is an invaluable resource allowing everyone access to knowledge of the world's biodiversity. It is an online resource, that is freely accessible and discoverable and persistently citable. Nicole showed us illustrations of some of the world's historical treasures that can now be easily accessed. BHL contains information on millions of the world's species. It was launched in 2006. Between 2018 and 2020 there were more than 31 million visits to the website from over 240 countries and territories.

The average monthly total users is greater than 132,000.

The Australian branch was launched in 2010 and is funded by The Atlas of Living Australia which is part of CSIRO. It began with just one organisation - Museums Victoria.

While BHL Australia is housed at Museums Victoria, it is closed to the public, access is only online. Within the Melbourne Museum, a small staff with a large and enthusiastic team of volunteers digitize journals and rare books. The volunteers do some of the scanning and the majority of the cropping and post processing as well as the critical work of adding biographic and page level data.

Nicole joined BHL Australia in 2014 by which time BHL had grown to include the Australian Museum, the South Australian Museum and the Queensland Museum. They all focused on zoology and palaeontology. Plants were missing. It was perceived as important to

increase the breadth of BHL both geographically and taxonomically and to widen the organisations involved.

BHL Australia now consists of 50 contributing organisations covering every state and territory and it includes state museums, state libraries, state herbaria, royal societies, government agencies, field naturalist clubs and other natural history clubs and societies. There are now 590,079 pages of Australia's biodiversity literature, all accessible online.

Having successfully sought a local history grant from the Public Record Office of Victoria to allow the digitisation of the publications of Victoria's Field Naturalist clubs, Nicole and her team began the daunting task of digitising records from them. The clubs' publications contain critical information on the flora and fauna of each of their specific regions across time. This sort of information is essential for tracking changes in species distribution and abundance.

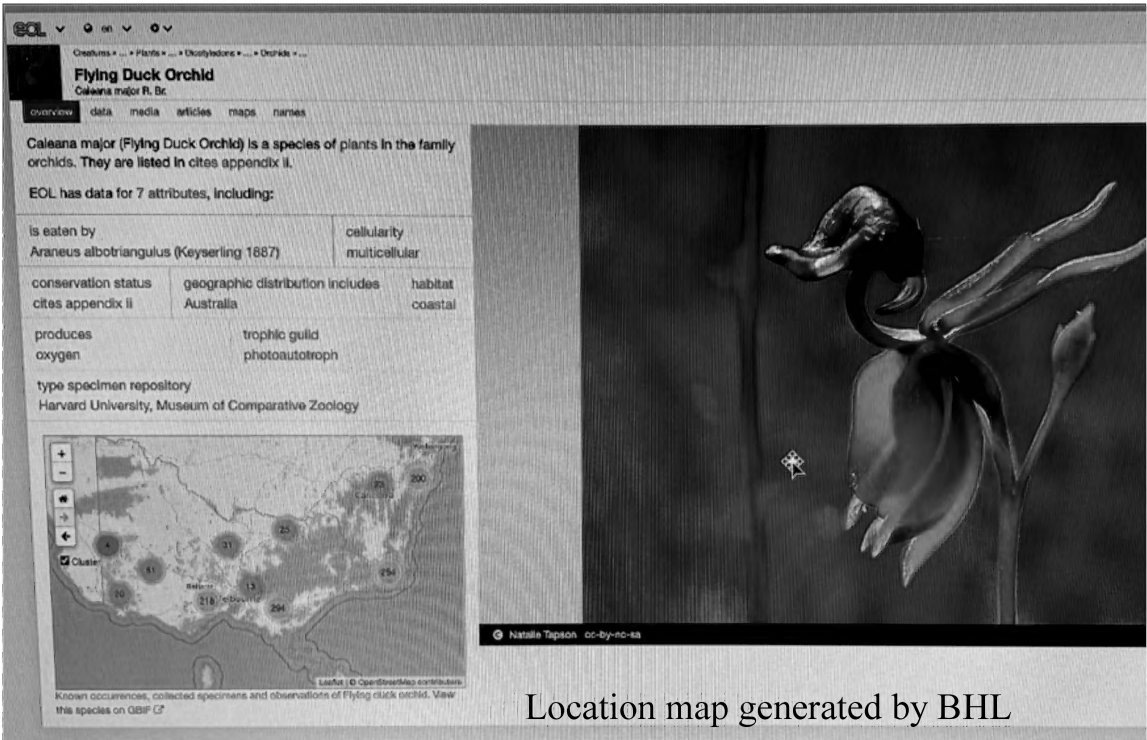
The grant was received in August 2003, volunteers were trained and Ballarat sent a box of back issues of The Ballarat Naturalist to BHL late last year. All of Ballarat's newsletters are now online available through BHL. That is 525 volumes, 4771 pages, including the first page of our website.

Nicole then explained in detail what that involves and what it enables in terms of access.

Each page of every issue has a credit at the bottom of the page, '*Contributed by Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat*' (FNCB). The landing page for The Ballarat Naturalist on the BHL website lists all the issues now uploaded. FNCB is credited as the publisher, the holding institution and the rights holder. Each of these credits is a link back to our website.

Nicole then gave an example to demonstrate the amazing possibilities that each page offers. From a recent issue of The

Ballarat Naturalist, Nicole took as an example the report written by Emily Noble on her talk on ‘Orchids of the Ballarat region’.



Page numbers have been added, on the top left there is page level data including which pages have images, tables, maps etc. By adding title, author, date, original publication and volume, each article becomes discoverable both within BHL and via external search engines. BHL have also assigned a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to the article which provides a unique, permanent and persistent link that can be used by anyone citing this article and will also resolve to this page.

Emily’s name is also a link. By **clicking** on her name, a list will appear of all the articles authored by Emily Noble on BHL, not just in The Ballarat Naturalist but all other publications.

Lower left box there is a list of data, automatically generated, of the scientific names of the species included, taken from the text and image captions.

By **clicking** on the upper right words “Show Text” you get a searchable version of the text from a book or newsletter of references to the same species from all the millions of species included on BHL records.

Every page that is uploaded onto BHL is processed through ‘Optical Character Recognition Software’ (OCR) and the resulting text file is

made available online next to the page it was generated from, for users to read. The OCR can also be read by machines.

It searches the OCR text for scientific names of animals and plants and compares them to the world's repository of accepted scientific names. When it finds a match it places them in the box on the lower left of the page.

Click on the scientific name and it takes you to a list of every single mention of that scientific name across all 61 million pages of the whole BHL website.

Then **click** on the squiggly symbol next to the scientific name, a box pops up listing all the online data bases that have a record of that scientific name.

Click on one of those and you are taken to a profile page for the species eg distribution, habitat, conservation status and more including a map showing where it is found.

Click and then you can add notes.

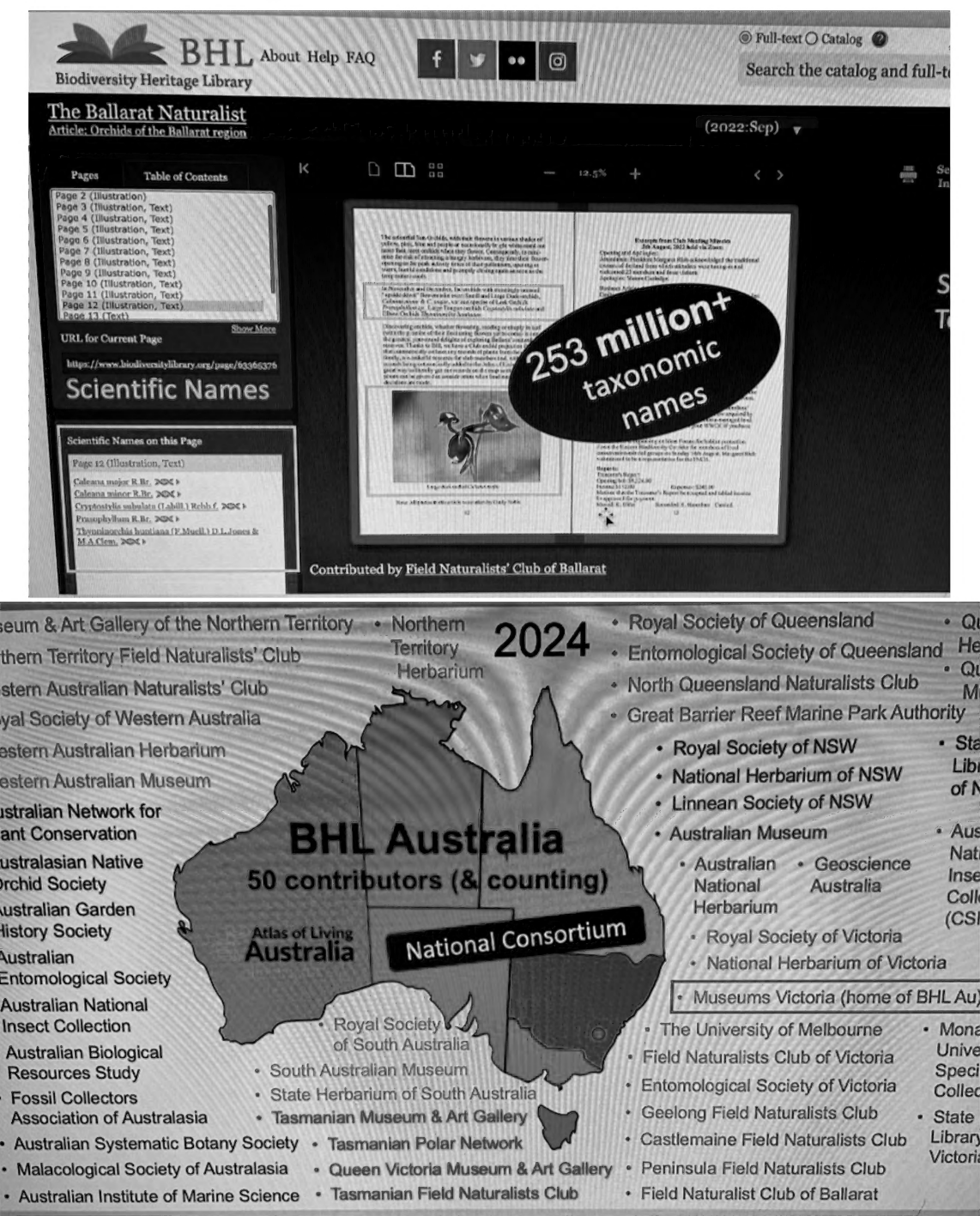
Nicole then went on to demonstrate using two reports by Margaret Rotheram, noting that our newsletters don't just include observations of species, they also contain general local knowledge eg local habitat, typical local abundance and specific locations and flowering times.

BHL Australia has so far been working on publications from the field naturalist clubs of Bendigo, Castlemaine, Geelong, LaTrobe Valley and Peninsula and is soon to start on Ringwood. So far there are 8,290 pages of Victoria field naturalist publications.

Nicole then described a further development.

Last year Wikipedia Australia contacted BHL Australia. They are keen to increase the amount of Australian information on Wikipedia and when they learnt of this project involving the Victorian field naturalists clubs, they awarded BHL Australia a grant to 'gather the rich social and natural histories of Victoria's Field Naturalist Clubs making them freely available through Wikipedia and linking them to the websites and publications of each organisation'. With the assistance of BHL, FNCB now has a Wikipedia page and anyone is

invited to add to this either directly or through BHL.



Nicole’s talk was accompanied by many images and diagrams. Her generosity with her time in explaining the depth and breadth that the BHL resource offers was greatly appreciated. It is an incredible resource, mind boggling in its range of capabilities. FNCB is grateful and proud to be part of this world wide resource and applauds the BHL team for their work on making the foundation of the world’s biodiversity knowledge accessible and discoverable online.

Report by Margaret Rich

A Working Bee on the La Gerche Trail, and a brief look at the Creswick Bike Trails Project May 5th 2024

A Working Bee on the La Gerche Trail appears on our calendar every 2-3 years to enable members to check the signage and species labels that FNCB members refurbished in 2015-16 with Parks Victoria. May is a good time to see the autumn colours of numerous exotic species associated with the old nursery and seed-gardens for regeneration of mined land in the 1980s.

The Trail was built by Creswick forestry students in the late 1990s to commemorate the work of John La Gerche and other 'forest bailiffs' in stopping forest destruction by miners and firewood cutters between Creswick and Ballarat



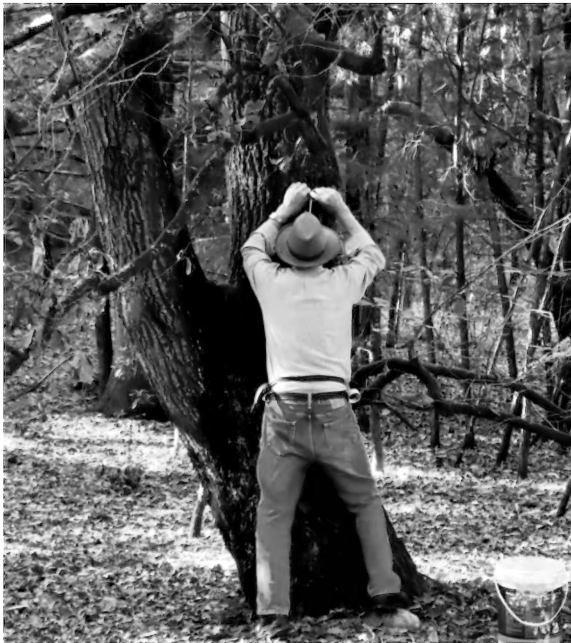
(<https://fieldnatballrat.wordpress.com/la-gerche-trail/>) .

14 members attended our working bee. Work on the trail was light this year, the main tasks being clearing of weedy species intruding on the trail and around the informative signs. Burgen (*Kunzia ericoides*) and Irish Strawberry (*Arbutus unedo*) were the main species advancing on the Trail. The *Arbutus* was fruiting heavily and many people enjoyed the ripe fruit. Some LG signposts needed cleaning and the screws on some labels required loosening to prevent bending (still to be done).

Vireya and Graeme walked the LandCare Trail, to assess any future needs for maintenance. The species lists for the area, produced by Elspeth Swan and Paul Norquay were valuable as always, and can be found on the FNCB website under La Gerche Trail.

It is interesting to note that Irish Strawberry (*Arbutus unedo*) has strong mycorrhizal associations that enable it to source nutrients and to fruit heavily on these poor ordovician soils. *Pinus nigra* and other pine species have similar associations. In Europe and North Africa

there is a strong revival in interest in the value of the ecological and economic values of this genus.



We held a picnic lunch in a court-yard at the Melbourne Uni Creswick Campus, and also viewed a rather spindly *E. leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum) in the campus arboretum, that had been planted by HRH Prince Charles in 1974 when he visited the Forestry School while a student at Timbertop.

The last part of the excursion was to view mountain-bike trails being built north of St Georges Lake by Hepburn Shire. We walked only short sections of the 52 km long Creswick Trails Project. While some trails seem relatively harmless (e.g. in Pine plantation), many are extremely intrusive and clearly damaging to biodiversity, habitat

and to tranquillity for animals and other users. Most trails are to be designated for 'bikes only' and for use in 'one direction' only. Damage from racing events and poor maintenance on these slopes area are serious concerns.



Suggestions were sent to Parks Victoria about signage and further work needed on the La Gerche Trail and Landcare trail (e.g, gorse removal, and trail drainage). The club has received thanks for the suggestions and to those who were able to help on this Working Bee.

John Petheram and John Gregurke
Images Elspeth S, John P, Val H

SEANA Camp. Phillip Island, April 19 to 21, 2024.

Phillip Island is an excellent location for a weekend of activities for Field Naturalists. Based on the popular Penguin Parade, nature tourism thrives here, with the splendid coastline, many nature reserves covering a range of habitat and numerous excellent walking trails. Everything is close-by, well-maintained, with good infrastructure.

The weekend was ably hosted by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, from Melbourne, using a number of their own experts with members of local clubs and conservation organisations. About a dozen Ballarat members attended.

Evenings were spent together, with meals followed by

Keynote Speakers:

1. Gerry Drew and Ed Thexton: Save the Western Port Woodlands Group. With very little original vegetation surviving, this group has been campaigning for some years for the retention and protection of valuable remnants. Settlement and long term farming involved the clearing of forests, and this pressure remains. The largest surviving forest is part of the former GMH Proving Ground, adjoining roadways used for testing Holden cars. Since its closure, ownership has changed and the forest area is now again up for sale. The group is lobbying the State Government to purchase this important remnant. Another threat comes from the proximity of sand mining, with some forest surviving only in reserve for this future development. The group's campaign has included activities and events which show the public the beauty and diversity of these forests, as did the impressive range of images accompanying the talk. Our support was sought in contacting the Vic. Environment Minister, Steve Dimopoulos.

2. Leon Altoff: Marine Invertebrates of Phillip Island. For decades, Leon and his wife, Audrey, have been involved in detailed specialist study and academic publication of Victorian species, within the FNCV Marine Study Group. Its regular group visits to the intertidal zones cover 362 locations, which enabled 53,447 observations, with many still to be identified or, often, named. Leon presented a truly remarkable slide show of the numerous species found around the island and in nearby San Remo. It was a feast of colour and shape, with some intricate and unusual physical characteristics clearly explained. Some may be seen easily in a rock pool, while others are just a mm. in size. Some involved the combination of one organism with another invertebrate "passenger" or even parasite. Around 900

local finds included: sponges, ascidians, anemones, crabs, crustaceans and a plethora of worms. Such abundance indicates the importance of invertebrates, essential to the wider web of life – and too often over-looked.

3. Graham Patterson: Coastal Guide to Nature and History, vol. 2. This recent publication covers Phillip Island and adjoining areas, part of a 30 year project (completed in 2018) to walk the entire Victorian coast. He began with the difficulties of such a project (including swamps, mangroves, private property, tides and crossing rivers as they widen and enter the sea), often overcome with the assistance of others (notably, his brother). After outlining the overall geology of the area, he took us along the coast - so many places, so much to tell. We heard intriguing historical details, saw remarkable old photos and reports and came to appreciate the precious ecological heritage.

Our members also enjoyed a wide range of **half-day excursions**, ably led by FNCV experts, local conservationists and guests including members of Birdlife Bass Coast.

1.Geology: Most local landmarks were visited, observed and very ably explained: Woolamai coast (to the Pinnacles and to the Old Granite Quarry), Pyramid Rock to Redcliff Head Lookout, Nobbies area to the Blowhole, Kitty Miller Bay and Forrest Caves.

2.History: The past, both Indigenous and Settler, was part of most tours, but featured in visits to Churchill Island, the Scenic Estate Conservation Reserve, the Old Quarry area and the shipwreck near Kitty Miller Bay.

3.Botany: While a range of flora was seen everywhere, it was interesting to see particular areas of regeneration backed by community support: #the Oswin Roberts Reserve preserves the largest remaining eucalypt woodland on the island; #the Scenic Estate Conservation Reserve survived 60 years of land clearing and grazing, with subsequent subdivision, to now feature walks (with excellent information boards) through wetlands, grasslands, varied native bushland, beach and mangroves; #Rhyll Inlet has several scenic lookouts across the tidal sandflats, dotted along a track passing through a range of bushland (including mangroves, moonah and melaleuca forests).

4.Birdlife: Phillip Island is the breeding area for perhaps a million Shearwaters (whose burrows were often seen, with “chattering” young sometimes audible), and now is home to thousands of Cape Barren Geese (since the recent eradication of foxes). Otherwise, local knowledge took us to excellent locations, with interesting viewings of many other species, although it was not peak season.

These were: #Rhyll Inlet, listed under the Ramsar Convention and thus its mudflats and sandbanks are a key place for migratory water-birds. Also native forests and mangroves; #the rugged coastline of the Nobbies provided good viewing of raptors, various gulls, terns and even a penguin in its burrow; #Swan Lake is the island’s largest freshwater feature, hosting many waterbirds with expansive views from two well-positioned hides. Some forest species, too, in areas of revegetation.

5.Fungi: a well-chosen area at Rhyll Swamp provided many specimens, with a Lilac Shelf Fungus a highlight.

6.Commercial Tours: were also available to Seal Rocks and the Koala Park.

A great weekend, thanks to the efforts and expertise of the FNCV.
-Shirley Faull. Images Carol Hall



Pyramid Rock

Australian Fur
seals



SEANA

Carol attended a birding excursion to Rhyll Inlet, the Nobbies where an Echidna appeared close to the boardwalks, and the boat trip to Seal Rocks. Juvenile Australian Fur Seals tumbled around in the water and were play-fighting, with adults resting on the basalt rocks. The weekend on Phillip Island was well organised by the FNCV with a variety of excursions which made the most of the natural features to be found. Kathy Elder and I stayed an extra day, visiting sites for which excursions had been offered in the program. We visited Pyramid Rock with a walk around the cliff, and then to Kitty Miller Beach at low tide where the receding water left interesting patterns in the sand and a variety of life was to be found in the rock pools.

Unusually, a colony of Grey-headed Flying Foxes arrived in early April, settling south of the Conservatory in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. The numbers grew from about 80-100, swelling to 250-300 mid-month, then decreasing in early May. March-April is the height of the mating season, with activity vigorous, prolonged and noisy. A single offspring would be born in September.

Report & Image Carol Hall



**Excerpts from Club Meeting Minutes 7.30pm, May 3rd,
2024. Held in person and via Zoom**

Opening and Apologies

Chairperson Neville Oddie welcomed 15 members and five visitors attending in person and six members attending via Zoom.

Apologies: Andy Arnold, Max Thompson, Peter & Claire Dalman, Andrew Grant, Shirley Faull, Mark Moravec and Wendy Bolger.

Guest Speaker: Nicole Kearney, Manager of the Biodiversity Heritage Library Australia presented the inspiring story of the Public Records Office of Victoria-funded project currently underway: “BHL: Capturing the history of Victoria’s Field Naturalists Clubs”

Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting on April 5, 2024

Whilst starting the process of preparing a submission advocating for Lake Goldsmith to be excluded from permitted duck-shooting sites from April 10 - June 5, we received an email from Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting (RVOTDS) noting that Lake Goldsmith was one of 32 wetlands closed to duck-shooters at the last minute thanks to the combined efforts of groups such as BirdLife Australia and RVOTDS. Thus, our submission didn’t need to progress any further.

- Neville Oddie prepared an excellent submission on the Draft Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy: Healing Country Together with some input from other members. The Club’s detailed submission to an earlier draft of the Strategy (primarily prepared by Elspeth) was included as an Appendix. Submitted April 29.

Andy Arnold attended the AGM of the Entomological Society of Victoria in April as FNCB’s representative.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

FNCB’s membership of SEANA has been renewed.

- Field Naturalists’ Club of Victoria’s AGM will be held on Sunday 5th May at 2pm. The guest speaker is renowned mycologist Dr Tom May who will talk about *Four decades of fungus hunting- from hand lens to smart foray*.

- In light of John Mildren’s death a week ago, John’s involvement in, and contributions to the Club were warmly acknowledged and remembered. Emily will write an “In Memoriam” for John for the next newsletter. Please send her any stories, memories, anecdotes or photos that you would like included.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report

Opening bal. as at Apr. 5, 2024: \$9,187.23

Income \$235.00

Expenses: \$129.00

Closing bal.: \$9,293.23

Motion: that the Treasurer's Report be accepted & tabled invoices approved for payment. Approved

SEANA Camp report: Carol, one of 12 FNCRB members who attended the Camp, presented a brief report including a few photos of seals, birds, an echidna, coastal scenes and plants from some of the field trips she attended: the Seal Rocks boat trip, The Nobbies and Rhyll. Carol also mentioned the excellent presentation by Leon Altoff (FNCRV's Marine Research Group), beautifully illustrated by amazing photos.

Nature Stewards Ballarat presentation: Emily reported that she had presented both a talk about the FNCRB, including its objectives, activities and undertakings, and an introduction to Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) of the Ballarat region and their associated bird communities to program participants on 27th April.

Discovering Ballarat's Bushland update: Carol let us know that descriptions for all localities are now complete and proof-read, there is an attractive colour map, Scientific Names have been updated, and references and other recommended resources are finished so quotes for printing are now being sought/ coming in.

General Business

Sunday 5th May field trip, 9.30am – 3pm: "La Gerche Trail, Creswick" to be led by John Gregurke and John Petheram.

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

* Carol showed us wonderful photos of the Grey-headed Flying Foxes currently roosting in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens (BBG) and told us a little about their mating/ breeding season.

*- Roger noted that the number of Flying Foxes in the BBG has declined significantly in the last month from approx. 496 down to 250 last week and 85 today as the supply of fruit declines and the cold temperatures prove discouraging,

*- Neville reported the stunning site of more than 250 Brolga in a paddock between Hamilton and Penshurst.

- Emily had observed Flame Robins, 4 pairs of Jacky Winters, two pairs of Scarlet Robins and a pair of Willy Wagtails chasing insects

together along Golden Lake Road, Piggoreet West. The adjacent farm paddocks also had a large flock (100s) of European Goldfinches feeding on seeds and around 30 Yellow-tailed Thornbills were foraging in the same area. She had also observed Flame Robins and Jacky Winters along Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary's boundary with Graded Road near Gordon's Lagoon, and a Flame Robin along with several male Scarlet Robins along the Two Dams Walk in Clarksdale.

* Les was surprised when a Stubble Quail that he came across in the open on his farm in Bungaree just walked away from him, rather than flying away rapidly and close to the ground as per usual. Les also enjoyed the site of a Black-shouldered Kite above Nimons Bridge, Newtown, on a recent BirdLife Ballarat outing.

*- Graeme showed a photo of a very exciting find captured by the fauna survey camera at his Lal Lal property: a Brush-tailed Phascogale!

Membership details for 2024

Ordinary Member (Adult) \$35 Distant Member \$20
Family \$55 Student Member \$15 Newsletter Postage \$13.20

Preferred Payment Method is by **direct deposit**,

Our bank account details as follows:

Account Name: Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc.

BSB: 633 000 Account Number: 119 112 290

Reference: Your Name

Our Next Club Meeting June 7th

“Myxomycetes of Black Sugarloaf” to be presented by Sarah Lloyd OAM, FungiMap. Via Zoom. Hybrid meeting
When? Friday 7th June 2024, 7.30pm in person at Fed Uni or via Zoom if you prefer.

Arrangements for the Sunday June 9th Field Trip-

-9.30am – 4pm: : Fungi Foray: Korweinguboorra, Moorabool Reservoir & Mollongghip, to be led by club member Les Hanrahan. Meet in the Fed University carpark, corner Gillies St & Gregory St, Wendouree for convoy and departure at 9.30am sharp. Another meeting point is at the junction of the Spargo-Blakeville Rd and Ballan-Daylesford Road at about 10:00am. Before lunch we will be near Cairns Road, Korweinguboorra. Lunch will be at about 12.30pm at the Moorabool Reservoir, where toilets are available. After lunch we will travel to Slaters Road, Mollongghip. Bring a thermos, food, camp chairs, camera, small mirror and field guides (especially your fungi-themed guides) and wear appropriate clothing and clean boots.

Meetings and Excursions

Club meeting Fri June 7th Speaker Sarah Lloyd OAM
Fungimap inc *Slime moulds at Black Sugarloaf*

Sun June 9th leader-Les Hanrahan, Fungi Foray -Korweinguboorra
& Mollonghip

Future events

Fri July 5th Speaker David Hollands *80 Years of Bird Photography*

Sun July 7th To be advised

Volunteers needed to write up these events for our newsletter.

Next Committee meeting Tues. 25th June at 7.30 pm by Zoom

**Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at
7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of
Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree),
Committee**

Website: <http://fielddnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com

Meetings - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

A monthly publication of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.
Incorporation # A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135